Learning Conversation Notes	
Name of Partner:	Date:
Placer Superior Court Family Law	March 8, 2006
Facilitation	
Number of Children Served:	<b>Ages:</b> 0 yr (60), 1 yr (52), 2 yr (85),
451	3 yr (86), 4 yr (68), 5 yr (87)
When Served:	Gender: Ethnicity:
October 20, 2005 – March 3, 2006	229-Male 353 - Caucasian
	222-Female 48 - Hispanic
	25 - Biracial
	11 - unknown
	8 - African American
	3 - Asian
	3 - Native American

### **Conversation Participants:**

Nancy Baggett, Deborah Bradley, Diane Bras, Don Ferretti, Shari Reed, Mike Romero, Yvonne Peabody, Lisa Boch – Facilitator, Janice Critchlow - Recorder

#### **Outcomes:**

All parents of children prenatal through 5 served by the Facilitator's Office are supported with legal information and referrals for needed services. Therefore the lives of their children will be improved.

Partnerships are established with law schools and the Facilitator's Office so that law students are trained to work in the clinic at low or no cost. Through this process First 5 funds for staff support are augmented to sustain services to families of 0-5.

### **Performance Measures:**

- Demographics (ages, gender, and when served)
- Track referrals made to other agencies
- Questionnaires for parents who are served more than once
- Facilitator data collection instrument
- Number of law school partners and students serving 0-5

# What is this data telling us about achievement of outcomes?

# Demographics (ages, gender, and when served)

The ethnicity of the children does not necessarily match the ethnicity of the parents.

The majority of the children served this time period were Caucasian.

There continues to be a significant number of parents of children 0-5 served by this program.

## Questionnaires for parents who are served more than once

Questionnaires: First question is *Is your child's life better because of the help you received in the Family Court Clinic?* Follow up questions ask if they've been to the Family Court Clinic before and if they have children 5 years or younger. The bottom has a checklist for parents to check other concerns. See attached samples.

The 151 questionnaires for first time visits to Family Law Clinic with children 0-5 do not have data about how children were helped because this was the first visit.

One hundred eight had been to Family Law Clinic before and the following information was taken from the questionnaires where there were responses:

Themes change from reporting period to reporting period.

Themes discerned in answers to the question: *How have the services of the Family Court Clinic helped your child?* during this reporting period:

- 24 did not recognize how their child was helped
- 16 help with process, legal questions
- 13 custody and visitation
- 10 child is safer or in a better environment
- 10 a generic yes
- 7 establishing parental rights or being able to see the child
- 5 non responsive or unable to read
- 5 child support issues
- 5 relating to agreements
- 4 relating to legal process
- 3 guardianship
- 2 get in touch with resources

### Comments about the themes on questionnaires:

- Many parents have literacy issues. This is generally part of the problem faced by these families; also makes some questionnaires difficult to read or interpret.
- Establishing parental rights: The clinic staff has observed a trend of increasing number of fathers that have primary custody (increasing number of mothers with meth problems and also may have mental health issues).
- Safer or better environment: These parents think the program helped them achieve a safer situation for their child(ren).
- Guardianships: Generally crisis situations. Tends to be grandparents (also aunts, uncles, siblings of parent) who are stepping in when neither parent is functioning. These would be CPS cases if there were not a relative stepping in to take guardianship. Guardianship forms are not user-friendly very complicated.
- Child Support: The parents are seeing that assistance in obtaining and collecting child support is beneficial to their child.
- Resources: Some parents identify this as a primary benefit provided. The Child Abuse Prevention Council's Family Resource Center is now at the Clinic Tuesdays and Thursdays.

- 24 parents who didn't see a benefit to their child: The comments may reflect how the parents feel about the court results rather than the services of the Family Law Clinic. These parents seem to be confusing the courts with the Family Law Clinic; the Facilitator's Office does not make decisions about cases.
- Sometimes both parents have substance abuse problems and the judge is faced with not picking the best place for the child but the lesser of two evils.
- Generic Yes: Parents just wrote *yes*. Some are getting help again with the same case or are getting help with another child(ren)/relationship. Some parents need reassurance during the process.
- Custody/visitation: Several parents commented that because of the existence of the Facilitator's Office, they were able to gain custody or visitation of the child. The parent who lost custody had significant issues that would harm the child.

### Facilitator data collection instrument

Essentially the same results as seen in other reporting periods. The parents of children 0-5 years of age tend to be younger, poorer, and less educated than the rest of the customer base of the Facilitator's Office.

About 60% are women, 40% are men.

Forty percent are first time visitors. Sixty percent are repeat customers.

Referrals to Family Law Clinic: Single highest percentage was friends -30%. Indicates that people in the community know this is a resource.

Ninety percent are residents of Placer County. For those who are not residents, typically the child is, or will be, in Placer County.

# Track referrals made to other agencies

Referrals made by Family Law Clinic: Seven percent are referred to private attorneys. Clinic is neutral and does not give legal advice but some parents do need those services.

Other referrals made by the Facilitator's Office included (in order of frequency):

Men, Infants, and Children (MIC) Program

Educational DVD about divorce

State self-help website with forms

Court's High Conflict Parenting Program (STEP)

District Attorney

Placer Dispute Resolution Service

There are not that many referrals to the Court's High Conflict Parenting Program (STEP) but many times STEP and the Facilitator's Office are serving the same parents. Judge and Commissioner are making many of the referrals to STEP.

MIC Referrals: Sometimes mothers are concerned that fathers do not know how to physically take care of the children or model appropriate behavior. Staff may suggest that the mom request that the judge mandate attendance at MIC for the father. Public Health Nursing may be a more appropriate referral when the concern is baby care/physical care. MIC is a good referral for issues relating to men being fathers/fathers figures and/or modeling appropriate behaviors around their children.

## Number of law school partners and students serving 0-5

Law students: This strategy works in the summer but not during the school year. Have not had a lot of luck in getting law students even though there is a stipend. Office is too geographically undesirable. Will probably improve when offices are in South Placer Justice Center off of Highway 65.

Interns from local paralegal college: There is almost always one intern working in the program. Interns are required to serve 100 hours – most interns are staying past their 100 hours.

### Broader approach to sustainability:

(Please see attached document)

First 5 originally paid for 100% of the Facilitator's paralegal staff. This picture has changed. While First 5 funding has remained consistent, the percentage of the overall Facilitator's Office budget represented by First Five's funding has dropped because the program is getting additional funding.

Money is coming in from sales of the *How to Do Your Own Divorce* DVD – selling for about \$10. Once they've recouped the costs incurred in making the video, the sales will be transferred to Legal Services of Northern California. (The Facilitator's Office cannot make a profit on the DVD.)

The Placer Court found the services of the Facilitator's Office valuable enough that \$50,000 in trial court funds were added to the overall budget of the Facilitator's Office. This funds one paralegal position.

Support of legal self-help services is a high priority statewide but actual funding is still up to each court. Placer has a supportive court for these services.

The sustainability piece has mushroomed beyond getting extra volunteers.

# Other points that were made during the conversation:

Mike Romero helped the program develop a simple, informal parent questionnaire that asks about how the program has helped. Used with all parents, even those with older children. Has been useful in reporting on how Self Help Clinics are helping families and this information is shared statewide.

First 5 funding initially provided a foundation and start-up for largely increased services for the Facilitator's Office. As a result, the Facilitator's Office is now being able to provide the foundation for expanded Self-Help services for the County. Few other counties have been able to do this. No other Family Law Facilitator's Office in California is receiving First 5 funding.

Program has worked with Early Childhood Relationship Support Project (ECRSP). There is now an email referral system. Also, working with ECRSP to add section on helping young children deal with divorce to the DVD.

## **Next Steps:**

Explore Public Health Nursing as a resource for parents needing basic care information (feeding, diapering, etc.). Mike Romero will talk to the Public Health Nursing Supervisor and ask her to contact Diane Bras.

Contact Kathleen Shenk at CAPC to see if books are still available for distribution in current waiting room.

Regarding the South Placer Justice Center's Children's Waiting Room: Contact Francine Nunes about room set-up and contact First 5 partners (UCCE Ready to Succeed, PCOE Lending Library, and CAPC) to see about the possibility of obtaining/borrowing materials for this room.

Ask CAPC staff for clarification and availability of home visiting resources.

At next Learning Conversation, share the anecdotal information for the Excel spreadsheet.

### **Next meeting:**

Wednesday, November 15, 2006, 1:00 – 4:30 pm